



Tracking Progress

Photo: John Cooper

Section 10: Tracking Progress

For the Lake Erie LaMP 2000 Report, this section is necessarily sparse. The LaMP is nearing completion of the problem definition stage, so neither ecosystem objectives nor ecosystem indicators have yet been selected. As Lake Erie ecosystem objectives and indicators are developed, they will be tied to the Great Lakes-wide State of the Lakes Ecosystem Conference (SOLEC) indicator exercise wherever appropriate.

Environmental indicators are measures of environmental conditions such as ecological integrity, aquatic health, human health, or quality of life. In addition to providing baseline data, environmental indicators can also provide: a) a measurement of environmental trends over time; b) an early warning signal for identifying environmental concerns; and c) valuable tools for measuring progress towards achievement of identified environmental goals. When properly developed and utilized, environmental indicators present the linkage between environmental actions and environmental improvements. Therefore, tracking environmental indicators is a tool to communicate environmental successes or failures and to identify remaining or new challenges.

Two critical pollutants have been identified for Lake Erie: PCBs and mercury. The LaMP 2000 document presents an initial list of actions that are underway or proposed to remove or further reduce these contaminants in the Lake Erie environment. These lists serve as a baseline to measure how much effort has been applied to addressing these chemicals and to assess what still needs to be done.

Loss of habitat has been identified as a key stressor and a beneficial use impairment. The LaMP 2000 document presents an initial list of the habitat projects proposed or underway that may enhance or restore habitat within the geographic scope of the Lake Erie LaMP. LaMP 2000 also lays the foundation for developing a Lake Erie Habitat Restoration and Protection Plan.

The action plans presented for PCBs, mercury and habitat provide the first overview of actions already underway to improve Lake Erie. For now, the ecosystem objectives and indicators needed to track any future progress under the LaMP are not yet in place. The schedule to begin this process is outlined at the end of Section 3. The Lake Erie LaMP will also need to develop monitoring plans to track the progress or implementation of the LaMP, as well as to measure the impact of implementation on protecting and restoring Lake Erie.